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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Port Information

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SOURCE Italian national, officer of an Italian merchant ship.

Source's vessel visited Novorossisk 31 Dec 53 to 7 Jan 54 to take on a cargo of grain for Western European ports. When interviewed, he was very cooperative but apparently was handicapped in his observations by the snow which covered the port. The ship loaded a cargo of barley and wheat shipped by Vsesojuznoje Objedineniye Exportkhleb to Avonmouth, and the bill of lading referred to Narodny Bank of London.

[The Office of Naval Intelligence, 5ND, in Report No. 13-C-54, furnished the following information to CIA for IAC dissemination in accordance with paragraph 3c of NSCID #7.]

Security Measures

1. My ship arrived off Novorossisk on 31 Dec 53 and was boarded by a pilot at about 37°54.3'E, 44°36'N and was taken to anchorage at 37°49.2'E, 44°43'N. At this point we were boarded by a search party of 15, including two women, one an interpreter, the other with the Customs, and accompanied by a doctor. The search lasted three hours; and, as usual, radios, binoculars, cameras, firearms, and stores were sealed. The language used in radio communications as well as by the boarding party was English. After the search had been completed, we were forced to leave the restricted waters of the anchorage due to a strong northeast wind, and the ship was led out by a military tug, with two soldiers aboard, beyond Sudzhukskaya Kosa where it lay to the south of Penaiskaya Bank until the wind abated. Then we proceeded at the same position as before, south of Doob Point, after which we proceeded into the harbor under heavy fog conditions (visibility 300 yards) following the pilot tug. I thought the tug had some form of electronic navigational aid because, despite the fog, it proceeded unhesitatingly without course variation to the harbor entrance. At indeterminate points on both sides of the Sudzhuk Bay entrance, there were searchlights with overlapping arcs of coverage whose purpose I supposed was the detection of intruders. My ship tied up at pier #3 (HO #4217), and three armed guards carrying submachine guns were stationed on the pier at the bow, garway, and stern of the ship, while a patrol craft was moored to a concrete caisson a short distance off our port quarter. The usual system of shore liberty passes was used, and the crew was allowed to remain

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ashore until 0100. No port regulations were issued the ship, nor was any attempt made to distribute propaganda. Prior to our departure, there was another thorough search of the ship, presumably for stowaways. One of the port security boats followed us for five or six hours after we left the harbor. I noted that the pilots were afraid to accept gratuities if there was any likelihood of their being observed by other officials, but one of them did accept several drinks of cognac while aboard, taking the precaution of rinsing his mouth with water before leaving the ship.

Vessels Observed

1. I observed one mail and passenger ship, nationality unknown, loading during the night on the opposite side of pier #3 and a Rumanian tramp ship at the Groznskaya Petro. Pier. There was a tanker on the north side of pier #5 and a Rumanian ship on the south side of the same pier. There were also one or two tramp ships at the coaling pier, unloading coal probably for use in the cement factory. In the late afternoon of 7 Jan 54, as we were leaving port, I observed one destroyer type vessel at 44°39.3'N 37°50'E accompanied by eight or 10 MTB's returning to the harbor, having just completed target practice. I did not see any submarines or other naval craft.

Port Facilities

5. Pier #3 at which my ship was docked was equipped with two railroad tracks, apparently not in use. The grain elevators were fed by a conveyor belt system, which I was not able to observe closely from the ship. The elevator building on the pier seemed to date from Czarist times and was approximately 440 feet long. Two movable grain chutes, whose capacity was roughly 200 to 300 tons per hour, were used to load the ship, and the three days' time consumed thus could have been reduced to one day if there had been no delays due to shifting of loading personnel and trimmers to other ships. The half of the pier closest to my ship was still badly damaged, and I noted no efforts to repair it or anything else in the harbor area. I had previously visited Novorossisk in the winter of 1952 and on this trip observed no change in the number and condition of the piers. The maximum draft of my ship while alongside the pier was 29 feet. Chart BA #162 (corrected 1952), rather than H.O. #4217, is correct in showing the true condition of the other piers. I saw the Coal Pier only at a great distance but noted that it had two cranes of undetermined type or capacity. I saw no other cranes in the harbor area. I saw no floating drydock or any evidence of shipbuilding, but the snow made observation of shore activities difficult. I did see an addition to the cement works, a large single new building, and a new large brick building, apparently an apartment house, behind pier #5. It had been erected since my last visit.

Miscellaneous

4. Laborers employed during the loading of my ship appeared to be in average health, although shabbily clad in heavy, quilted clothing. I noted women workers in the elevator taking test samples of the grain. During loading operations about 20 trimmers were employed and also three workers on the dock. I observed that the Doob Point light is now fixed whereas in 1952 it was flashing, but aside from the search lights mentioned above I saw no harbor defenses, nets, shore batteries, or other military installations. All hydrographic details in BA #162 (corrected 1952) are correct.

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